

Message Text

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67

ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /031 W

----- 073829

R 211105Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4256

INFO CINCPAC

COMUSSAG

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 PHNOM PENH 14228

EXDIS

DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS SECDEF AND CJCS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, MILI, CB

SUBJECT: SECURITY OF RICE CROP IN BATTAMBANG

REF: A. PHNOM PENH 11886

B. PHNOM PENH 13960

1. SUMMARY. VISIT TO BATTAMBANG PROVINCE BY MISSION TEAM REVEALED THAT PROTECTION OF PRESENT RICE CROP IN SHORT TERM AND OF PROVINCE IN LONG TERM IS ENDANGERED BY LOCAL MILITARY LEADERSHIP'S OVER-RELIANCE ON AUTO-DEFENSE FORCES, WIDE DISPERSAL OF TERRITORIAL FORCES, PREOCCUPATION WITH CITY'S DEFENSE, AND FAILURE TO IMPLEMENT CONSCRIPTION/RECRUITMENT PROGRAM TO BUILD UP MR-3 INTERVENTION FORCES. FANK COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF AND HIS PRINCIPAL ASSISTANTS SUBSEQUENTLY MET WITH LOCAL OFFICIALS TO EMPHASIZE NEED TO REORIENT THEIR THINKING. END SUMMARY.

2. POL/MIL, ECON, MEDTC AND DATT REPRESENTATIVES ACCOMPANIED BY MAJOR GENERAL HOU HANGSIN AND FANK GENERAL STAFF OFFICERS VISITED BATTAMBANG PROVINCE DECEMBER 10-11 TO SURVEY GENERAL ECONOMIC AND SECURITY SITUATION AS REGARDS CURRENT RICE CROP AND PROSPECTS FOR REFUGEE
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RESETTLEMENT PROJECTS THERE. BRIEFINGS BY MR-" COMMANDER GENERAL SEK SAM IET AND HIS STAFF AND VISITS TO OUTLYING AREAS CLEARLY INDICATED THAT THE PROVINCE IS RELYING PRINCIPALLY ON AUTO-DEFENSE FORCES TO PROVIDE SECURITY

IN COUNTRYSIDE. OVER 10,000 VILLAGERS IN 108 VILLAGES SPREAD OVER EIGHT DISTRICTS ARE ENROLED IN AUTO-DEFENSE AND NOW POSSESS ABOUT 4,700 ARMS, ALMOST HALF OF WHICH WERE REPORTEDLY PURCHASED BY THE VILLAGERS.

3. MILITARY STRENGTH HAS LARGELY BEEN DISPERSED IN ENCADREMENT FOR AUTO-DEFENSE UNITS AND COMPANY-SIZE AND SMALLER POSITIONS. SOME 830 TROOPS LIVING IN GROUPS OF 6-10 IN (AND OFF OF) VILLAGES ARE USED AS AUTO-DEFENSE ENCADREMENT. OF 59 POSITIONS MANNED BY TERRITORIAL FORCES, 52 HAVE LESS THAN 100 TROOPS AND AVERAGE IS 35. BATTAMBANG PROVINCE HAS ONLY ONE BATTALION AS AN INTERVENTION FORCE AND THIS WAS AT TIME OF VISIT ON OPERATION IN NEIGHBORING PURSAT PROVINCE. AS A RESULT VIRTUALLY NO REACTION FORCES EXIST TO PROTECT AUTO-DEFENSE UNIT. ONE 108-MAN AUTO-DEFENSE UNIT VISITED NORTH OF CITY, FOR EXAMPLE, RELIED ON REACTION FORCE OF 30 TERRITORIALS AT ELEVEN KILOMETERS DISTANCE. (DATT IS REPORTING FURTHER ON MILITARY DISPOSITION IN BATTAMBANG.)

4. TO PROTECT RICE CROPS, SWEEPS HAD REPORTEDLY BEEN UNDERTAKEN IN SEVEN OPERATIONAL AREAS BY A MIXED FORCE OF TERRITORIALS AND AUTO-DEFENDERS OF UP TO TWO BATTALIONS EQUIVALENT STRENGTH IN EACH AREA. AUTO-DEFENDERS, WHO IN MOST CASES CONSTITUTED OVER HALF OF THESE FORCES, REPORTEDLY SHELLED EACH OTHER IN FOUR-DAY SHIFTS. MR-3 COMMANDER AND HIS CHIEF OF STAFF WERE UNABLE TO SUPPLY DETAILS ON HOW THESE OPERATIONS WERE CONDUCTED, HOWEVER, AND CONTRADICTED EACH OTHER WHEN ASKED WHETHER THEY WERE COMPLETED OR CONTINUING.

5. AN ENEMY DOCUMENT CAPTURED IN OCTOBER 1973 OUTLINING PLANS FOR A THREE COLUMN ATTACK ON BATTAMBANG CITY SEEMED TO BE THE PRINCIPAL PREOCCUPATION OF THE MR-3 COMMANDER. HE HAD PREPARED PLAN WHICH CALLED FOR ALL TERRITORIAL TROOPS TO WITHDRAW TO 13 KILOMETER
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PERIMETER AROUND THE PROVINCIAL CAPITAL WHEN THIS THREAT MATERIALIZED.

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED ABOVE ADDEES.

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ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /031 W
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COMUSSAG

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EXDIS

6. ALTHOUGH FAMILIAR WITH THE PRESIDENT'S PERSONAL INSTRUCTIONS ON NEW RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES, NO STEPS HAD BEEN TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT THEM. AS NOTED REF B, A CONSCRIPTION PROGRAM HAD NOT BEGUN AND A RECRUITMENT CENTER HAD NOT BEEN ESTABLISHED.

7. FANK COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MG SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ ACCOMPANIED BY ACS FOR PERSONNEL BG KIM AN DORE, ACS FOR OPERATIONS MG MAU SUM KHEM, ACS FOR TRAINING MG HOU HANGSIN, OTHER FANK OFFICERS AND CHMEDTC WENT TO BATTAMBANG DECEMBER 17 TO DISCUSS RECRUITMENT AND DEFENSE MEASURES WITH LOCAL MILITARY AND CIVIL OFFICIALS. IN A MEETING WITH LARGE NUMBER OF CIVILIAN PROVINCIAL AND CITY OFFICIALS SOSTHENE UNDERScoreD NEED FOR IMMEDIATE CONSCRIPTION DRIVE, OUTLINED PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED AND OBTAINED LOCAL OFFICIALS' AGREEMENT TO BEGIN PROGRAM. FOLLOWING THIS THE CIVILIANS LEFT AND MG MAO SUM KHEM, THE FANK J-3, BRIEFED A NEW CONCEPT PLAN FOR BATTAMBANG DEFENSE WHICH EFFECTIVELY NEGATED PLAN PREPARED BY MR3. IT FOLLOWS GENERAL LINES OF FANK DRY SEASON PLAN AND IF PROPERLY DEVELOPED AND FOLLOWED WILL PROVIDE FOR DEFENSE OF COUNTRYSIDE AS WELL AS CITY. KIM AN DORE ARRANGED FOR PHNOM PENH TEAM TO SET UP RECRUITMENT CENTER. IT WAS AGREED THAT TROOPS ENCADREING AUTO-DEFENSE UNITS WOULD BE PULLED BACK TO THEIR UNITS, WHICH WOULD THEN ASSUME ACTIVE ROLE IN DEFENSE AND ACT AS INTERVENTION FORCE FOR AUTO-
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DEFENSE UNITS, THAT FIRST RECRUITS WOULD BE USED TO FILL UP EXISTING BATTALIONS AND REESTABLISH 83RD BRIGADE AS MR-3 REACTION FORCE, BUT THAT PROVINCE WOULD ALSO FURNISH MEN FOR GENERAL RESERVE UNITS OUTSIDE MR-3. SOSTHENE LECTURED MR-3 COMMANDER AND HIS ASSISTANTS ON DANGERS OF RELYING ON AUTO-DEFENSE UNITS TO WARD OFF ENEMY BATTALIONS (WHICH COULD IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES HARVEST WEAPONS ALONG WITH RICE) AND NOTED THAT BATTAMBANG DEFENSE SHOUL BE DESIGNED TO PROTECT RICE AND STOP ENEMY BEFORE HE CAN BUILD UP FORCES TO ATTACK CITY.

8. COMMENT: MR-3 COMMANDER SEK SAM IET'S INTEREST HAS

LONG CENTERED ON ECONOMIC RATHER THAN MILITARY ASPECTS
OF BATTAMBANG PROVINCE. WE BELIEVE THESE VISITS WILL
HELP REDIRECT HIS ATTENTION. WE WILL, HOWEVER, FOLLOW
CLOSELY AS POSSIBLE THE PROVINCE'S PROGRESS IN
INCREASING ITS MILITARY MANPOWER AND REORIENTING ITS
DEFENSES.
ENDERS

SECRET

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